

Acts 21:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

Analysis

Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar—The tribune confused Paul with a notorious insurgent who, according to Josephus, led 4,000 sicarii (dagger-men, Jewish assassins) to the Mount of Olives, claiming Jerusalem's walls would fall at his command. The Romans crushed this rebellion, but the Egyptian escaped. The tribune assumed Paul was this wanted terrorist, explaining his large military response.

Four thousand men that were murderers (*σικαρίων*, sikarioi)—These 'dagger-men' mixed in crowds during festivals, assassinating Romans and collaborators. That Lysias thought Paul led such a movement shows how dangerous the situation appeared. Paul's cultured Greek response (v. 37) shocked the tribune, who expected an uneducated revolutionary, not a sophisticated scholar.

Historical Context

Josephus (Antiquities 20.8.6, Wars 2.13.5) records this Egyptian false prophet's uprising around AD 54. The sicarii represented violent Jewish nationalism opposing Rome. Felix later encountered these terrorists (Acts 24:1-27). Paul being mistaken for this revolutionary highlights the political tensions in first-century Judea.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do false assumptions and incomplete information lead to unjust treatment of God's servants?
2. What does Paul's response teach about answering accusations with dignity rather than defensiveness?

Interlinear Text

οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἰ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ὁ πρὸ τούτων
not G687 thou Art G3588 that Egyptian G3588 which before these
G3756 G4771 G1488 G124 G4253 G5130

τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀναστατώσας καὶ ἐξαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν
G3588 days G2250 madest an uproar G387 and G2532 leddest out G1806 into G1519 G3588

ἔρημου τοὺς τετρακισχιλίους ἄνδρας τῶν
the wilderness G3588 four thousand G5070 men G435 G3588

σικαρίων
that were murderers
G4607

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:26 (Parallel theme): Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

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